

Appropriations Committee, Public Hearing on the Deficit Mitigation Plan
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Senator Harp, Rep. Geragosian and members of the appropriations committee,

I am Pam Fields, Executive Director of the Arc of Meriden Wallingford and Board Member of CCPA. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk about the effects of the Gov. Mitigation Plan on my agency and the 300 individuals and families we serve.

The Community Providers across the state care for over 500,000 of Connecticut's neediest citizens. These Providers, have been chronically underfunded for over 20 years. This chronic underfunding has eroded Connecticut's safety net and is placing many citizens in jeopardy. Most of the individuals that receive services under this system have been victimized in the past while living in institutional settings; it worries me that we will victimize them again through lack of services

As our Agency partners with the state to continue to provide services to individuals with disabilities in our community, meeting critical needs and saving the state thousands of dollars, we are constantly, finagling resources & cutting expenses in order to bridge the gap. Our agency has had to fundraise tens of thousands of dollars in order to balance our budget. My agencies workers comp, insurance and utilities have all increased. Our medical insurance increased due to increased rates and increased again as our employees partners lost their job they turn to us for their insurance. We did receive a small amount of money for utilities, and do not get me wrong it was greatly appreciated but I still had to cut almost \$200,000 from our services to balance my budget.

We try to be creative and bring on new business to spread the costs, sometimes that works well, and sometimes it just makes it worse.

Having the Governor cut community services with her recessions and then turn around and cut them again with the Mitigation plan is mind boggling to me. If the people we serve do not get the services they need in their homes and community they will turn to more expensive alternatives. It is not fiscally responsible to cut these services when it will just cost the state more in the long run. I am well aware of the position of the state and nation. Like everyone I follow the situation every day. Like every citizen in Connecticut the State also needs to be looking for cost savings and cost effective ways of doing business. The Community Provider system is the states way to save money. If the state destroys that safety net through cuts and underfunding tell me HOW will the state provide the services for its neediest citizens?

With the economy in the position it is, I feel it is critical for Connecticut to spend its money wisely and to keep its safety nets strong.

Thank you and I will keep you all my thoughts as you work diligently to resolve this crisis for the best of all Connecticut's' citizens.